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7 Fair Trade and human wellbeing

Michael Northcott

For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.

(Psalm 128.2)

At the heart of most classical and modern debates on the nature of ethical life is the claim that humans desire happiness and wellbeing above all things. From Epicurus to John Stewart Mill individuals are said to act rationally when they use things and relate to others in such a way as to promote their own sense of wellbeing. They may not always choose actions that actually have the effect of promoting their own wellbeing, but this is not because they do not seek it. It is rather because they misconstrue the kinds of actions that will promote it (Spaemann 2000: 30).

The eudaimonistic claim of the philosopher finds analogy in what modern economists call rational choice theory according to which individual consumers and firms act rationally when they put their own interests – in purchasing a good for the lowest price or in procuring and marketing a good in such a way as to maximize profits – above consideration for the interests of others involved in the transaction. Self-interested choices of this kind may involve externalities or costs to others that diminish their wellbeing. Such costs might take the form of a low wage that does not compensate the producer of a particular product sufficient that he or she can decently clothe, educate, feed and house his or her family. Or they might take the form of environmental pollution from an industrial process which, due to lack of government regulation or proper enforcement, is permitted to toxify the environment of residents or workers in the vicinity of a production facility or of those who are affected by polluted air, land or water. Such diminishments of others' welfare consequent upon the rational choices of individual consumers or firms are said by some advocates of rational choice theory to be illustrative of the intrinsic conflict and competition between rational choosers that, since Thomas Malthus and Charles Darwin, economists have argued is 'natural' to the evolution of life and the progress of human society.

The uncivil economy

Not all practitioners of the dismal science of economics present things quite so darkly. Adam Smith argued that the butcher and the baker do better in their capacity to provide for their family, and for others, when they act not from benevolence but from self-interest in maximizing their profit from their respective butchering, brewing and baking activities. As Smith puts it in a well-known passage:

It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages.

(Smith 1776: I. 2.2)

When they devote themselves to their own business, the principle of the division of labour, operating in tandem with the market, ensures that butcher, brewer and baker provide a better-quality product to others, and enhance their own family's wealth and wellbeing and that of others. But crucial to this enhancement of wellbeing is the existence of a shared and civil place for exchange and a shared moral realm in which each exchanges goods in a way that has the outcome of recognizing the appropriate value of the raw materials and skill utilized by the other.

Once removed from the confines of a particular city the operation of the market can be anything but civil. In a global economy where supply chains can extend from Edinburgh to Ecuador it is possible for exchanges of labour and land through the medium of money to be unfair and unjust. Comparative advantage between nations is a principle first clearly enunciated in classical economics by David Ricardo. Ricardo argued that free trade advances the collective sum of economic welfare because it allows regions and towns within nation-states to specialize in things they are good at or climatically best situated to produce (Ricardo 1817). They trade these things at a comparative advantage with the things they are less suited to make and which others can make more cheaply. But the classical dogma of comparative advantage was conceived on the model of trade between traders and local communities within one political entity or between European nations and their colonies. The doctrine is reductionist since it assumes that a simple procedural rule – free movement of goods – can promote wellbeing more widely regardless of the institutions or practices of those who engage in trade. Ricardo neglects the role of good laws, of customs and institutions in promoting and sustaining virtues such as trust and honour without which business exchanges outside what Spaemann calls the 'boundaries of the normal' run the risk of being debased into expropriation and theft, and of promoting ecological destruction or slavery (Spaemann 2000: 55).

At this point it will be helpful to consider another objection to the classical, and neoliberal, economic proposition that growth in trade, by increasing wealth, increases human wellbeing. In a tradition of moral reflection going back to

Christ and Saint Paul in the Christian tradition, and to the Stoics and Plotinus in the classical, the case is made that far from enhancing human happiness wealth may act as an obstacle to the realization of the blessed or happy life. Christ instructs his disciples:

And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

(Luke 12.27–31)

To make wealth the goal of life is the cause and nature of the wordliness of nations but not a goal that Christians should adopt, for two reasons. To do so would manifest a distrust in the providential provision of God, and to do so would not serve that particular vision of beatitude and wellbeing associated with the pursuit of the Kingdom of God.

On the happy life

In the first extended reflection on the blessed or happy life in the Christian tradition Augustine may be said to take his cue from Christ, albeit with a neoplatonic twist, when he argues that the condition of blessedness is not constituted by material goods or worldly power and success but is rather a quality of the soul: ‘As the soul is the life of the body, so God is man’s life of happiness, of whom it is written: “Happy is the people whose God is the Lord”’ Psalm 143. 15 (Augustine: xix, 26). In similar vein Thomas Aquinas, in an essay on happiness in the *Summa*, argues that people do not seek money or power as ends in themselves but rather because they believe that possessing them will make them happy. Therefore happiness ‘does not consist in external goods or in goods of the body’ but rather ‘in goods of the soul’ (Aquinas: 1.2, Q2, A7). In the most extensive Christian treatment of the theme of happiness, Boethius suggests that suffering and not success is the surest means for the soul to be enlightened to the true wisdom which is the source of a happy life: ‘for of all suffering from Fortune, the unhappiest misfortune is to have known a happy fortune’ (Boethius 1902: 34). For Boethius suffering imposed by the wicked on the just has the potential in the providence of God to provoke the soul to a more virtuous life:

Wherefore high Providence has thus often shewn her strange wonder, namely, that bad men should make other bad men good. For some find themselves suffering injustice at the hands of evil men, and, burning with hatred of those who have injured them, they have returned to cultivate the fruits of virtue, because their aim is to be unlike those whom they hate. To divine power, and to that alone, are evil things good, when it uses them suitably so as to draw good results therefrom.

(Boethius 1902: 134)

In this vein the suffering imposed on poor farmers or factory workers in developing countries as a consequence of unfair terms of trade may actually be beneficial for their ultimate happiness. At any rate it might be said that relief of such suffering in the form of terms of trade that enhance the wealth of the poorest may not necessarily result in an increase in the blessed life since wealth and not bodily privation is the more likely cause of temptation and distraction from the love and worship of God which is the source of true happiness and virtue.

There is a growing body of empirical research which seems to confirm some aspects of the theological claim that happiness and wealth are not intrinsically related. This research shows that increases in wealth beyond modest levels in developed societies do not necessarily increase wellbeing and may in fact reduce it (Diener and Biswas-Diener 2002). Rising incomes since the 1970s have not correlated with higher reported states of happiness (Easterlin 1974), and they are at the same time associated with rising levels of divorce and other forms of social breakdown and stress (Clydesdale 1997). Part of the reason for this may be that in high-income societies people mistake the source of happiness for increases in wealth whereas those who place greater emphasis on loving relationships report higher states of life satisfaction (Diener and Oishi 2000). At the same time other research clearly shows that reported wellbeing is higher in rich developed countries than in poor developing ones (Diener and Diener: 1995).

Clearly the relationship between wealth and wellbeing is complex and contested. In this chapter we might hope to clarify just one aspect of this relationship and this is in relation to the attempts by people in wealthy countries to ameliorate poverty in developing countries through the medium of fair trade. Do these attempts result in greater human wellbeing? If so, is it an increase in wellbeing that is confined to the developing countries or do we find increases in wellbeing among fair trade consumers as well?

The righteous kingdom

Christ's instruction to his disciples not to place concern for material welfare at the forefront of their intentions does not suggest that he believes that material wellbeing is not a necessary condition of a good life: 'seek ye first the kingdom of God and *all these things will be added unto you*' (Matthew 6. 33). It is not that Christ objects to his disciples being well clothed and fed. On the contrary, Christ observes that he is criticized by his opponents for the quality of food and wine that he and his disciples enjoy when they sit down to dinner: 'The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children' (Matthew 11. 19). The instruction not to worry about food and drink does not mean that the disciples are actively to seek hunger or privation, as Boethius seems to suggest might be appropriate for the begetter of wisdom. The life of wisdom is neither to have more *nor* less of such things but instead primarily to seek the Kingdom of God. Providence will add those things that are needful to

those who seek after the Kingdom, though they do not set getting them as their primary goal.

It is often said that Christ came preaching the Kingdom of God and that the disciples founded the Church instead. But when we examine the teaching of Jesus about the social and political character of the Kingdom of God, and the social and political practices of the early Christians, we do in fact find remarkable continuity. Christ's teaching about the Kingdom begins with him reading a messianic vision of wellbeing in the synagogue at Capernaum taken from Isaiah: 'he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord' (Luke 4. 18–19). The acceptable year of the Lord is a reference to the Jubilee year in which every 50 years according to Leviticus intergenerational debts of land and money were to be redeemed and those in debt bondage. Christ's announcement of the Kingdom is clearly economic and political in its implications and a radical challenge to the Roman authorities, and their Jewish collaborators who collected taxes that were driving Israelites into debt and landlessness in the time of Christ. Hence in another saying Christ tells his disciples 'except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 5. 20). Now, by righteousness, Christ does not mean ritual purity but right relationships with other people, and in particular relationships characterized by justice. Justice emerges from the earliest sermons of Christ – particularly in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke – as a central consequence of the pursuit of the Kingdom as the ultimate goal.

It should not surprise us therefore that the first economic action of the first Church in Jerusalem is to enact economic justice among the people of God. Disciples sell lands and houses, and give all the proceeds to the Church to be distributed to any who have need and it is said that 'no one counted their possessions as their own' and 'they had all things in common' (Acts 4. 32). Clearly there is continuity here between the teaching of the Kingdom and the first social performances of the Church. The Gentile churches do not seem to have taken up this same approach with such alacrity, and indeed Saint Paul has to chide and encourage them to give of their wealth to those who are in need, and in particular to his own needs and the needs of other preachers among them, and to the suffering Christians in Judea (2 Corinthians 8). However, the early churches, both Jewish and Gentile, soon developed practices of almsgiving, and of care for the poor and homeless. And in later centuries a distinctive set of economic practices emerged which in the Middle Ages included communal deliberation on just wages and just prices. Such deliberation is in strong contrast to the presumption of Smith and his heirs that wellbeing will be best advanced when, instead of collective deliberation, aggregates of market decisions by consumers and producers are left to maximize the wealth of nations.

The efficiency of market relationships

There are two crucial claims in Smith's *Wealth of Nations* that we need to notice. The first, and most widely acknowledged, is that he sets market aggregation through the laws of supply and demand above collective deliberation on just wages and prices. The second is that much of the comparative increase in the wealth of nations such as Britain on which he reflects was based not on market aggregation but on coercive mercantilism, backed by military power, on the lawless frontier of empire. To this day, many forms of market engagement in developing countries are still subject to what Albion Barrera calls economic compulsion; they are not conducted in the manner of exchanges between butchers and bakers in the civil sphere of eighteenth-century Glasgow. While individual producers – small farmers in Tanzania or Kenya, textile workers in free trade zones in Mexico or Vietnam – may volunteer to participate in market exchanges, such as the sale of a cash crop for a low price grown with their labour, their volunteering may not be entirely voluntary (Barrera 2005). They may through force of circumstance be compelled to participate in market exchanges for the goods that they grow or make which offer inadequate recompense because they have no other choices available to them. Either they sell their labour or the product of their land at an unjust wage or price or they and their families go hungry, or more hungry. It is this element of compulsion that Christ clearly refers to in his first sermon in Capernaum. Liberty from oppressive compulsion, redemption from bondage to debt, are the marks of the Kingdom of God and the 'acceptable year of the Lord'. The Kingdom produces wellbeing because it sets justice and liberty above production and wealth. And by implication where there is compulsion and injustice, even in societies where wealth is increasing, wellbeing is diminished.

The pathology of inequality

Against the now widely held economic proposition that 'a rising tide lifts all boats' empirical evidence reveals the harmful effects of economic compulsion and the reduction in wellbeing produced by the compulsion and injustice associated with extremes of inequality. Medical epidemiologist Richard Wilkinson's research shows that even in rich societies where inequality is great, social solidarity between rich and poor is significantly undermined, and all parties suffer from this loss, both rich and poor. Hence the rich have poorer mortality outcomes in highly unequal societies, and the poor of course have outcomes that are even worse (Wilkinson 1997). According to Wilkinson the reason is the increased personal and social stress that results from the decline in social solidarity and trust in highly unequal societies, and the rising tide of the pathologies of extreme inequality which include not only ill-health – which is ultimately a cost to society as a whole – but crime, drug addiction and violence. These are behaviours from which the rich must find ever more complex forms of protection (Wilkinson 1996). In addition to Wilkinson's psychosocial theory of health

inequality we might also add that another reason for the lower outcomes in terms of wellbeing for the rich in highly unequal societies is the psycho-spiritual stress arising from the refusal to acknowledge that they have any moral responsibility for the pathologies of the poor in their own society. According to Saint Paul in Romans where guilt is real, and denied, it affects the inner life and sense of wellbeing of the one who incurs it.

In the light of Wilkinson's findings Christ's teaching about the nature of the good life may be rephrased as follows: 'deepening compassionate connections' with others is crucial to a life that turns out well (Dalai Lama and Cutler 1998: 68–71). Hence, in Christ's parable of the Last Judgment in Matthew 25, what separates the sheep from the goats and determines the worth of a life is the manner in which the individual manages such connections. The sheep are those who have compassionately acknowledged their connection with the sick, the prisoner, the hungry and ill-clothed act in such a way as to alleviate their suffering. In so doing they have, according to this parable, not only found connection with those who suffer but connection with ultimate reality – with God in Christ who is present among the suffering. The negotiation of inner desires and outward actions by the individual on this view is constrained by the reality of the world in a metaphysics of compassion that cannot be reduced to the inner life. Compassion is the bridge between the inner and outer worlds – between the psycho-spiritual life of the individual and the outer realms of the social and the divine.

The Epicurean view of this inner–outer negotiation, as reformulated by modern advocates of rational choice theory, is that each individual is a perfect whole and behaves rationally when she puts the satisfaction of her inner desires before the interests of others in the outer world (Spaemann 2000: 54). To the extent that individual choices are affected by external reality it is suggested that this inner–outer interaction, which is conceived of as successive but unconnected interactions between individuals, is best governed by impersonal forces – market forces, supply and demand, and anonymous exchanges. By this means social forces function to maximize the preference satisfaction of market actors – both individuals and firms – and thus achieve a degree of efficiency greater than that presented by collective deliberation over such interactions in trading relationships where parties are fully known to each other. If as a consequence of the spread of such kinds of anonymous exchanges individuals increasingly come to distrust other individuals, and friendship between different social groups and classes diminishes, this does not provide grounds for falsification of the modern Epicurean theory on its terms. Wellbeing in this approach is about the inner state of the individual and, provided that individuals are maximizing their preferences, it may be said that the practice of this theory grows wellbeing.

As Robert Spaemann argues, this focus on the felt experience of the atomistic individual neglects many features of what most reasonable people would recognize as a life worth living, including friendship and love, and the shared customs and procedures, institutions and laws that sustain peaceable and rich social interactions between individuals. It also neglects the sense in which a life may be said to 'come out well' (Spaemann 2000). The coming out well of life cannot be

assessed purely on the basis of reported states at particular moments, not least because the coming out well of life is related to the fit between the life of the individual and the larger structure of truth that constitutes reality. This is why Christ suggests in the parable of the sheep and the goats that the worth of a life can only be assessed after death, and that that assessment will include an estimate of how the life lived deepened, or refused, the claims of compassion on those among whom the individual lived. The truth of being subsists in the created connections between people. Reality has a given moral structure and only when a person's inner life finds some accord with this can it be said that it is a good life. As Augustine puts it, the one who 'wants to become blessed here on earth through themselves' manifests 'an astonishing blindness', for:

what kind of friend would a person be, if they were indifferent about the betrayal or faithfulness of friends? And indifferent about the troubles of the city, the civil war, the injustice and distress which comes from it, about the scourge of humanity, war, unjust as well as just? Whoever tolerates these or thinks about them without a troubled soul, if they consider themselves happy, is actually all the more miserable since they have lost their human sensibility.

(Augustine: XIX, 8)

Many today in European and North American cities have no direct firsthand experience of civil unrest or war, and are inured to the kinds of injustices that cause real hunger in other parts of the world. But materially they are connected to such injustices and wars when they buy tropical agricultural goods such as tea, coffee and bananas, tropical hardwood products such as mahogany or rosewood household or garden furniture, and when they buy oil and gas from troubled regions of the world such as the Caucasus, Iraq and Nigeria. The individual who is able to remain content in her own pursuit of happiness when materially connected and sustained by goods sourced from regions of the world afflicted by injustice and war is, in Augustine's terms, endangering her own humanity. For Augustine, friendship is the practice that prevents selfish isolation from the needs of others, and it was in global friendships that the practices of Fair Trade originated.

The inefficiency of friendship

In the UK, two Christian students at St John's College Durham who had volunteered in South Asia set out to help the farmers and rural labourers who had become their friends through trade from their college rooms. They began to source craft products from producer groups in South Asia and to sell them from a loft in the college, and then, as the work expanded, through local congregations after worship on Sundays. After graduating they took their emergent fair trade cooperative to a vicarage in Houghton-le-Spring and from that vicarage sprang first one and then two of Britain's first Fair Trade organizations,

Traidcraft and Tearcraft. Traidcraft is now a PLC as well as a trust and a charitable foundation, and this threefold organization guarantees that the original identity of Traidcraft as a 'Christian response to poverty' could not be undermined in the unlikely event of a takeover (Traidcraft 2008: 2). Many of the producer groups with whom Traidcraft works are from a faith background, and more than 80 per cent of Traidcraft's volunteer Fair Traders, who sell Fair Trade goods in church and village halls, in small high street cooperatives or from their homes or car boots, are regular churchgoers.

In the Netherlands one of the most successful Fair Trade projects came from the initiative of the Dutch liberation theologian Fransico van der Hoff Boersma. Frans had lived for much of his life among coffee farmers in Oaxaca, Mexico, and he saw how the farmers were being made destitute by the falling price of coffee on world markets in the 1980s (Lamb 2008: 123). On a visit to the Netherlands in 1987 he met with the director of Solidaridad, the Dutch Christian development organization, and proposed a new approach to trading coffee in which 'the power of the strongest does not determine the rules of the game'. As a result of his visit to the Netherlands Solidaridad worked with other church organizations, charities and the Max Havellar Foundation, one of the earliest Fair Trade organizations, to launch a new Fair Trade coffee label in Holland that captured 1.7 per cent of the Dutch coffee market within a year of its launch in 1988, selling coffee sourced on the Fair Trade model from Mexico (Lamb 2008: 124–125).

Boersma argues that fair trade does not necessarily have to disrupt the normal workings of economic markets:

It doesn't create artificial commercial conditions, but rather new ones based on justice. To pay the producer the real price for producing a product is not only economically rational but is grounded in the most elementary of ethical principles.

(Boersma 2006)

His friends are Mexican farmers whose lives have been made miserable by unfair and distorted terms of trade between rich developed and poor developing countries. Through Fair Trade, sales and supply chains are established across thousands of miles which honour that friendship by ensuring that every link in the chain is guaranteed as fair and just, and the farmers receive a proper recompense for their product. Because of this recompense they are able to afford to pay teachers to teach their children, to provide drinking water and electricity to their homes and to improve their cramped living conditions.

Wellbeing from Fair Trade

Five million people in more than 50 developing countries now benefit from Fair Trade terms (Becchetti 2006). A number of qualitative studies of the effects of Fair Trade on producer groups indicate that the measures of wellbeing identified

by these Fair Trade users are indeed enhanced by the increased income and the guaranteed price that Fair Trade offers. Parents are able to send their children to school and so enable their children to find a route out of poverty that was not available to them as parents. Householders are able to improve the quality of the roofing and drainage materials around their huts or homes. The steady income also enables some to invest in diversification so that they can supplement income from cash crops with crafts. There is evidence too that Fair Trade enhances community life, since involvement in Fair Trade requires participation in cooperative marketing practices. Fair Trade, because it encourages best environmental practices, also helps reduce the environmental impacts of farming and enhances farmer health as compared to plantation workers, who are required to use large quantities of pesticides and who frequently suffer health effects as a consequence. Because of the ongoing dismal prices for coffee in world markets, Fair Trade provides 'the difference between survival and bankruptcy' for many small farming communities (Reynolds *et al.* 2004). In addition, the economic security which long-term Fair Trade contracts provide enables participating farming communities to 'fortify the cultural, social and economic assets of their communities' (Reynolds *et al.* 2004: 1120). On the sense of wellbeing among Fair Trade farmers, a study of Kenyan farmers reveals a greater income satisfaction than that expressed by farmers not participating in Fair Trade networks but receiving similar income levels. This is likely because participation in Fair Trade cooperatives brings other non-monetary rewards including long-term security, technical assistance and improved dietary intake from cooperative food purchasing (Bechetti 2006: 23).

Benevolence and wellbeing

While there have been a number of academic papers and reports indicating an increase in farmer wellbeing as a consequence of Fair Trade practices, there are fewer studies on the impact of participation in Fair Trade among consumers in the North. But those that are available also point to wellbeing enhancement among Northern consumers. The discussants in a German focus group express a consciousness of guilt and historic responsibility for the exploitation of agricultural producers in the South and that being involved in Fair Trade makes possible an ethical responsibility for these farmers that was not possible before (Farnworth and Rabe 2004: 6). It should not surprise us in the light of the foregoing that we find this expressive effect among those engaged in the Fair Trade networks in the North as well as in the South. Many who visit modern supermarkets are aware of the burdens that discount selling imposes on farmers, in Europe as well as in the developing world. Indeed, there is evidence that consumers find the experience of visiting such supermarkets depressing, and this element of suppressed guilt could be implicated in that depression.

Harriet Lamb of the Fair Trade Foundation describes Fair Trade as a 'people to people' trade. It is a movement that has begun to challenge the 'the brutal logic of the global marketplace' through the power of thousands of people living across the globe who decide that they want to make a difference:

for me, Fairtrade is a way of taking up Gandhi's challenge I absorbed working in India as a young woman – to 'be the change you wish to see in the world' ... Everyone can so very easily buy and support Fairtrade – and so connect with farmers and workers across the world. With each purchase, we are helping build that living, more human alternative. And, at the end of the day, I am a mother who wants mothers the world over to realise the same dreams for their children as I do for mine.

(Lamb 2008: 178)

Like Boersma and the founders of Traidcraft, Lamb has known farmers in the developing world as friends, and she finds that her actions in connecting with them through Fair Trade enhance the moral quality of her life as well as their material wellbeing. A focus group study of Fair Trade users in Germany revealed a similar link. The principal elements of Southern farmer wellbeing that the study revealed were of most interest were the ability of farmers to educate their children, improvement in the social status of women farmers, improvements in the local environment and in community life, and securing a guaranteed income for farmers from their produce (Farnworth and Rabe 2003: 15).

Fair Trade represents a mobilization of a range of actors in North and South and the evidence from other studies of wellbeing, such as the Swiss canton finding (Frey and Stutzer 2000), indicates that participation in such networks is a crucial element in reported quality of life. Through Fair Trade, consumers and producers alike are recovering an element of self-sufficiency and participation in their acts of production and consumption instead of leaving the coordination of these acts to the 'invisible hand'. This enhances individual moral agency and responsibility for the social and the natural world.

According to Augustine and Aquinas, wellbeing is not so much something to be experienced in this life as the outcome of a life well lived, the beatitude received by the saints after a life directed to the supreme good which is the love of God and the service of God's creatures. But in the practice of Fair Trade such service is not only a duty performed in the pursuit of the ultimate end but an experience that enhances a sense of personal wellbeing. Is there not something rather life-denying about the Augustinian vision of beatitude that Aquinas and Boethius also affirm? Aiming for the good is not about *feeling* good. Is this the import of Christ's teaching 'seek ye first the Kingdom of heaven'? Well, Fair Traders are putting the kingdom of justice ahead of cost in their own purchasing decisions. And they are finding that not only does this just act provide material sufficiency for those who formerly lacked it but the connections of friendship across the globe that the social networks of Fair Trade produce enhance their experience of coffee drinking or tropical fruit consumption. A pecuniary sacrifice – for most Fair Trade products do cost more than the conventionally traded alternative – produces a non-monetary but real reward. It is precisely this element of reward of which philosophers and theologians are often suspicious. The presumption shared by the Stoics, Augustine and more recently, Immanuel Kant is that if virtue finds reward in this life then it is 'mendacious', to use

Augustine's description, or not as excellent as it would be were no reward in the offing (Augustine: XIX, 4). Duty because it is duty is preferable to duty that offers any sense of reward. But if human happiness and active concern and care for others are intrinsically connected, then doing good does indeed promote doing well (Borgonovi 2008).

Festal fairness and Eucharistic eating

At the time of writing, the complex procedures that certify a product as fairly traded have only been undertaken for agricultural products which, apart from cotton, are for eating and drinking. While coffee and tea are sometimes utilized in individuated acts of imbibing, food and drink are more often taken in the company of others. In many cultures tea and coffee drinking are essential lubricants of social life, from meetings between scholars and traders to familial and workplace gatherings. Christ's most frequent enactment of the Kingdom of God took the form of feasting. He courted the accusation that he was a glutton and a wine bibber because the meal was the performance *par excellence* of the Kingdom whose coming he announced. But the meals of Christ gave offence not so much for what he ate as with whom he ate. He often dined with Jewish rabbis and theologians, as he himself was both of these, but he also dined with tax collectors and sinners, peasants and prostitutes. At one such dinner a woman of dubious reputation has the temerity to anoint his feet and his hair with perfume, and in permitting such an act of sensual devotion Christ gives offence even to the disciples.

For all that Christ instructs his disciples to 'take up the cross and follow me', he also enacts with his disciples a festal way of living which they are charged to carry on after his death. The command to take up the cross is a teleological condition of discipleship. The goal of the disciple is not eating and drinking but laying down one's life for one's friends. This preparedness arises not from duty but from love. Because they learned to love one another as Christ loved them – regardless of class, condition or race – the early Christians were said to have 'turned the world upside down', a world, that is, in which dinners were meant to be hierarchically ordered with slaves preparing the food, women standing by and the noblemen lying around the low table positioned according to rank.

Fair traders do not set as their primary goal to drink better-tasting coffee. Indeed, one of the criticisms of Fair Trade is that it rewards farmers with a higher price for a product that tastes no better – and in the early days of Fair Trade sometimes tasted worse – than ordinary coffee, though Fair Trade coffee marketing has focused much more on a taste premium in recent years (Linton *et al.* 2004). The purpose of Fair Trade is not eating and drinking but justice. When child mortality goes down among farmers belonging to democratically managed cooperatives supported by long-term contracts, advance payments and guaranteed fair prices the end of justice produces a real improvement in wellbeing in farming communities. But when the fair trader enjoys a cup of coffee with friends in a café knowing that it is Fair Trade coffee and that it has this effect, the experience of sharing in the coffee has a new festal element. This element

arises from the knowledge that this coffee has not been bought at the price of another's suffering in contrast to coffee that relies upon unfair and coerced exchanges between poor developing country farmers, the big four transnational coffee companies and New York coffee futures traders. That a coffee transaction involving moral discernment turns out well for the producer does not mean that it may not also enhance the sense of wellbeing for the consumer. For 2000 years Christians have known the power of festal and just eating and drinking. They experience this weekly in the Eucharistic feast in which the fruits of Christ's redemption are made known in the transformation of the constituent elements of daily food and drink – bread and wine. Eucharistic eating is the regular performance in the lives of Christians of their belief that the way of the world, and of the nations, can be changed and that in the performance of its changing there is hope of a better life of justice and love in the present as well as in a future beatitude (Northcott 2007). It therefore should not surprise us that in many places Fair Trade coffee was first drunk and sold after the Eucharist in churches.